

# ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

## SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF CANTON, MS.

[Read and accepted April 6, 1846.]

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To the Selectmen and Citizens of Canton.

GENTLEMEN,

Your Committee for the supervision of the Common Schools, beg leave to make their

### ANNUAL REPORT.

It has been the one great aim of your Committee to approbate none but *competent* and *efficient* teachers, and they are happy to say that the majority have been such, employed the past year, and the beneficial results have been seen in the improvement of the schools committed to their charge.

The Committee have to regret, however, that in some instances there has been a failure on the part of teachers to do their *whole work*, and the results have been undesirable in the extreme.

But as things are, your Committee find it utterly impossible, wholly to guard against such undesirable issues, with all their best efforts to avoid them. The custom so prevalent, to employ a new teacher every term, is, in their opinion, deleterious to the best interests of the schools; and too often proves a waste of money, a waste of time, and is attended with a want of permanent progress on the part of the children.

At the commencement of a new term, a stranger presents himself to be examined; your Committee ascertain his or her literary qualifications, and find them so far competent to teach; but the Committee know nothing of their

energy, or tact for discipline, and for interesting the children in their studies; qualifications so desirable and indispensable to the permanent progress of a school.

These strangers are qualified in intellectual attainments, and bring recommendations of good moral character, and according to law your Committee must approbate; but when they go into school, there is often seen an utter failure in energy, or tact, on the part of some of these teachers, to discipline and interest the school in their studies.

This evil is lamentable, and our schools suffer immensely under such instructors; but we see no way to avoid it, so long as a stranger comes at the commencement of every new term, and in one instance two in one term.

Under our present system of *constant change*, the most that can be done is this. The town's Committee must be slow in approbating, and the Prudential Committees must be at unwearyed pains to employ teachers of whom they know something definite, as to their energy and skill in the proper management and proficiency of a school.

As a whole, the condition and proficiency of our schools is on the advance, and the majority of teachers have proved themselves competent and successful; and we hope soon to say as much of every school in each district.

During the year your Committee have made about one hundred visits to the different schools in town, and proceed to specify somewhat respecting each of them.

#### DISTRICT No. 1.

The Summer term was taught by a young lady, and as this was her first attempt, her success was commendable. There was order and discipline in the school, the manners and morals of the children were looked after, and something of proficiency was made among the scholars, while their teacher endeavored to interest them in their studies.

But we regret to say that the Winter term of this school was, on the whole, a failure. The young man employed to teach it for some cause or other did not come, but sent his brother. This brother was qualified, and had succeeded well in other places, and so long as he taught this

school, his efforts were successful. But about the middle of the term, just as he had become somewhat familiar with the scholars, and they with him, he left, and sent another brother to take his place.

Now we ask how any school can flourish under such a series of change on the part of the teacher? where each teacher has to become acquainted with his pupils, before he can set them to work efficiently, and has also his own peculiar method of government. The Committee would say, with regret, that the examination at the close of the Winter term of this school was not satisfactory; while the money of the district was expended to little or no purpose.

#### DISTRICT No. 2.

The Summer term of this district was interrupted for a time by the ill health of the instructress; but her success, considering all things, was praiseworthy, and her efforts unremitting to benefit the school. Your Committee would recommend that this important school be intrusted for the future to the care of none but a teacher of mature judgment and long experience.

The teacher of the last was employed the present Winter term, whose competency and efficiency we have already noticed in the report for the past year. Your Committee wish that he might become the *permanent* teacher of that interesting school. His tact for managing, and success in interesting the children in their studies, are apparent to every discerning eye in that district. He has looked after the manners and morals of his pupils, and has given their efforts and energies a right direction and impulse, in climbing the hill of science.

We are happy to state that this district has voted to build; and we hope soon to see their beautiful location, still more adorned by the erection of a spacious, well ventilated and inviting school-house, finished in a neat, convenient and permanent manner, in modern style.

Such a school-house on such a spot, with its highland scenery, and in the centre of a spacious play ground ornamented with trees, will be an honor to the liberality and enlightened taste of the district; and will prove a blessing to their children, and generations yet unborn.



## DISTRICT No. 3.

The Summer term was a continuation of the labors of the teacher employed for the preceding Winter term, whose success was noticed in our report of last year.

This teacher deserves credit for his efforts in elocution and vocal music, two very essential branches, but sadly neglected in our day schools. To make children good readers, is indispensable to a good education, and the teacher of this school did his best to cultivate and mature a taste for correct reading and enunciation among the pupils.

Your Committee regard Singing, when properly managed, as a truly desirable acquisition for children at school, and its present happy influences are not duly considered. Every teacher of our schools ought to be a singer of correct taste, as to style and selection of music appropriate for children, and ought to strive to make every child in school a singer. An occasional respite from study spent in performing vocal music, is like unbending a bow for the time, that it may recover its elasticity to twang the string with renewed force, and send the arrow more swiftly and with greater precision to the mark.

This same teacher has had a private school in town for some months past, which has been successful and satisfactory so far as we know, but your Committee hope to see the day that our common schools will become such that every child may have an equal chance for a sound and thorough education.

The school in this district was divided this last winter, and a primary school commenced. Considering this school as a first attempt—taking into account the inconveniences of the place where it was held—and being the first effort of a young lady of character and talent, in the capacity of teacher—the school has answered our expectations, and given a general satisfaction to the parents.

The Winter term of the higher department we regret to say was a failure. The teacher employed failed to secure the confidence of the children, and the school was soon in a state of insubordination. Fortunately, however, a female teacher belonging to the district was employed, with a sufficiency of energy and tact to restore order, and made

the school for the remainder of the term all that could be expected.

We are happy to say that this district has voted to raise their house, and provide two commodious rooms for the accommodation of the schools. We regard this as a favorable omen for the future, and hope soon to see the grounds ornamented with trees, with a tasteful, airy and suitable house, finished in good style; to be of permanent benefit to the present generation, and a valuable legacy to bequeath to posterity.

#### DISTRICT No. 4.

The Summer and Winter terms were in charge of teachers, suitable and efficient, who did their best for the pupils under their care; and some of the children made commendable progress. But we are sorry to say that the insubordination of one or two of the larger scholars, was the occasion of their leaving the winter school in the midst of the term, and the effect was unhappy on the school.

There are serious obstacles which meet every teacher in that district, and serve to prevent this school from keeping pace with the other schools in town. We earnestly hope it will not be thus always.

#### DISTRICT No. 5.

The Summer school on the whole was of some advantage, but the female teacher employed was somewhat deficient in energy and tact, traits so indispensable for a teacher, in order to discipline a school, and urge on every pupil to do their best.

The same teacher was employed the present as the previous Winter term; and your Committee cannot refrain from expressing their entire satisfaction with the marked and permanent progress made in this school. Each and every scholar seemed ready to answer every question in their department at the examination; and we can but feel that the money expended here was to some purpose. May the time soon come, when our schools may be in charge of such teachers, not for a term or two, but permanently.

## DISTRICT No. 6.

The Summer school was in charge of the same female teacher who has been there for some years, and we believe with satisfaction to the parents, and commendable success on the part of the pupils.

Your Committee, however, would recommend to some of our experienced female teachers, to *modernize* somewhat their own modes of teaching and governing. Let them visit some of the celebrated female schools in adjacent towns, in term-time, and catch something of the energy and tact of distinguished female teachers.

The past like the previous winter term in this district has been attended with success. The pupils are mostly young, but having enjoyed for successive winters the instruction of the same valuable teacher, this school is one among the most forward.

Too much cannot be said in favor of constantly employing the same teacher, when you have found one competent and efficient to do their whole work. This teacher stands pre-eminent in penmanship, an indispensable requisition for a teacher of children, whose first efforts in this department are, to imitate.

## DISTRICT No. 7.

Here there is no change ; this school enjoys the labors of the same experienced female from year to year ; and your Committee consider this, on the whole, the most forward school in town. The reason is obvious. It is not because there are no other teachers employed, as well qualified as the instructress of this school ; but the success of this school lies in the fact that there is *no change of teachers*.

Here a new face does not come in every term, as unlike the face of the old teacher, as their modes and tact for instruction are unlike, the last to undo what their predecessor had done. The same guide is there alway, well acquainted with each mind, to conduct them up the rugged hill of science, well knowing where she left each pupil at the close of each term.

That same guide comes in at the commencement of a

new term, thoroughly acquainted with all, and does not take them back to the foot of the hill to start anew, but moves on from the last stopping place, ever onward and upward.

Allow your Committee to say in view of this fact, that if good male teachers cannot be permanently employed in our schools, the Committee would much prefer that first rate female teachers be employed from year to year, with only short intervals of vacation.

They are decidedly of the opinion that such a course would be the most preferable, and would result in the most permanent advantage to our schools.

In closing this report, one evil still prevalent must again be mentioned, it is this : the want of constant and punctual attendance at school, on the part of many of the children.

In vain that we build suitable houses, and employ competent teachers, if the children are not there *every day*, and *in season*, to reap the benefits of instruction. We reported the last year the "astonishing and deplorable fact, that more than one-third of all the children in town, were habitually absent from the schools, and consequently deprived of the benefit of education."

We are happy to say that, the past year, there has been an improvement in this respect in all the districts. So far as we can ascertain, nearly three-fourths of the children in town have been at school ; and in most of the schools, more or less of the pupils have not been absent or tardy for one half day. This speaks well for some parents and scholars, and would that all would go and do likewise.

We can but lament however, that one-fourth of the children have squandered the gone year so far as their own education is concerned, while the majority have often been late at school. There is fault somewhere, and does it lay with the children alone ?

The most that a majority of the parents can do for their children is, to give them a decent education ; and if parents will take this work in hand, and see that their children are *always* at school in term-time, and *ever* in season, every child in each district, may spend the golden



hours of youth in procuring a good and sound education, of more worth to them than silver, since it will fit them for the duties and responsibilities of after life, and will develop an immortal mind.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

WM. B. HAMMOND,	} Committee
BENJAMIN HUNTOON,	
ROBERT SHANKLING,	
	of the town of
	Canton.

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*Voted*, That the Report be printed and distributed, one copy to each family in the town.

A true copy of the Record,

JAMES A. BAZIN, *Town Clerk.*

*Canton, April 6, 1846.*